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UA68/8/2 Dero Downing Oral History

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INTERVIEW WITH DR. DERO DOWNING

DATE: March 22, 1978

PLACE: Dr. Downing's office at WKU

INTERVIEWED BY: Dr. James Bennett

Produced by Oral History Department
Department of History
Western Kentucky University

INTERVIEW NO. 7656

James Bennett: 22 March, 1978. Interview with Dr. Dero Downing, President, Western Kentucky University in his office on the campus. The interviewer is Jim Bennett.

Dr. Downing, where were you born?

Dero Downing: Fountain Run, Kentucky.

J.B.: Fountain Run. Barren County?

D.D.: Well, no. It's a little town in the edge of Monroe right near the Allen County line. In those days it was called Jintown.

J.B.: Jintown. I've been through there; I didn't know exactly where I was when I was there. And what high school did you attend?

D.D.: Well, at the age of six, our family moved from Tompkinsville; that was the county seat of Monroe County. We had moved to Tompkinsville from Fountain Run. Then we moved to Horse Cave in 1926 or '27, I guess, and I went all through elementary and high school at Horse Cave, Kentucky.

J.B.: Now, you were quite active in athletics there, weren't you?

D.D.: Yes, I had an early interest in athletics and had older brothers who enjoyed athletics, and Horse Cave had a rich athletic tradition. We had a fellow there who was an outstanding basketball and baseball coach and a great teacher as well as being an outstanding coach, Mr. W. B. Owen. W. B. was a Western graduate; he had the nickname of "Sarge". He was an outstanding Western athlete, having played for Mr. Diddle here at

Western, and had been at Horse Cave for a number of years and had a great reputation there for developing outstanding athletic teams. And, as so many times you find in the life of a youngster growing up in a small town, an individual such as Sarge Owens can have a tremendous influence on your life, and this was the case as far as my association with Mr. Owen, who was just an outstanding fellow and a great coach. And he encouraged me at an early age to develop what little talent I seemed to have at that time in basketball, particularly, and I did play on some rather outstanding teams at Horse Cave High School.

J.B.: I think you've probably just answered my next question which was why did you come to Western?

D.D.: Well, actually, I had not received as much encouragement about coming to Western as I had hoped would be the case. I had played on three high school teams that had participated in the state tournament, and I thought the scouts would all be coming knocking at my door, and, strangely enough, the one where I wanted most to go - and that was at Western where I had had a brother, by the way, who enrolled at Western in 1937. And then when I graduated from high school in 1939 I wanted very much to come to Western, but I felt the only way I could attend college would be on an athletic scholarship. I received the most encouragement from the University of Tennessee. And I went to the University of Tennessee for - in those days it was permissible for a prospective student athlete to engage in tryouts. So, I went down to the University of Tennessee and had a tryout, and they offered me a scholarship. And I was thinking seriously about accepting the offer to attend the University of Tennessee, and then one late afternoon in March in the spring of 1939, I was out behind our house there at Horse Cave at the little barn where we kept the milk cow and I was out there milking, and someone came to the barn door and hailed me, and it was Mr. Diddle. And he pulled over a bale of hay and sat down there and said he had heard I'd been down at the University of Tennessee talking about going to school there,

and he said, "Hell's flitters, they can't do anything for you at the University of Tennessee; you're gonna go to Western." And, of course that was what I had hoped I would be able to do, and he offered me an athletic scholarship, and I enrolled at Western, then, in the fall of 1939.

J.B.: What did an athletic scholarship entail then?

D.D.: Well, back at that time, the cost of attending college was comparatively low. The tuition, I think, was something like \$20 a semester, and room and board was also very, very reasonable, and every athlete had a part-time job. I know my job was to mop the floors. The tile floors in Van Meter Hall had to be mopped each day, and that was my job. I mopped those floors every day, and for doing that work and for participating in athletics, I received a full scholarship which included room, board, books, and the entire cost of attending college. And dollars were mighty hard to come by in those days, and I'm sure it's hard, even for those of us who experienced it then, to fully comprehend as time has passed how difficult it was for families such as ours back in Horse Cave. There were seven of us, seven children in the family. My father and mother were great folks, but like so many families in those years the finances were right stringent, and I suspect that over the four-year period that I was enrolled at Western as a student that my parents didn't provide more than ten or fifteen dollars toward - and that would be in the form of a gift or something at the time of a birthday or something of that nature.

J.B.: When you first got to Western can you recall the impact it had on your mind as well as sort of a description of the school when you first came here?

D.D.: It was overwhelming, and the fact that the university's grown so much over the years might make those of us who are here at this particular point in time think that back as

far as 1939 that it was really not much in the way of a physical plant or a student body. But things are, throughout life I suppose, somewhat relative, and for a youngster who had attended a small high school where the graduating class was something like 21 graduating seniors to arrive on the college campus and have the huge facilities like Cherry Hall, which was our major classroom building, to have the registration period when the 1200 to 1400 students who were enrolled here at that time were engaged in the process of class selection and program planning - and back in those years the registrar of the college engaged in all the academic counseling and program planning - and we thought that this was about the biggest place that we'd ever seen, and it was right overwhelming, to tell the truth.

J.B.: Cherry Hall was fairly new then, too, wasn't it?

D.D.: Classes had commenced in '37 in Cherry Hall, so it was a relatively new facility and a magnificent one. All of this part of the state of Kentucky took great pride in the beautiful classroom building, which I'm pleased to say continues to have a great deal of personality and is today one of the truly outstanding educational facilities on any campus, not only in the state of Kentucky, but just about anywhere you could find.

J.B.: One of my students was asking me just today - he was helping me prepare this - and he said, "I hear that there used to be a lot of departments in Cherry Hall." And I had sort of forgotten that when I came, we had just about - except for some of the science buildings and agriculture and music and home ec - just about everything was in Cherry Hall, and that was in 1960.

D.D.: Yes, Cherry Hall housed most of the departments on campus. We had the - what's now the industrial education annex was the home economics building, and then we had the

music building. And down on the Ogden campus we had the old Ogden Hall and Snell Hall where the department of Biology and Zoology was located there, and agriculture was located there, but Chemistry and Physics, for example, were in the first level of Cherry Hall.

In the fall of my freshman year, Mr. Diddle took me up to the bookstore. Jimmy Hall, who was the manager of the bookstore, said he needed one additional clerk. Mr. Diddle said, "Well, I have a guy here I want you to put to work." They were paying at that time 25¢ an hour, and I was so thrilled to get that part-time job. The bookstore was located on that ground level right next to the Chemistry Department, and on Tuesdays and Thursdays when they had all of their chemistry labs in operation, you could hardly remain in that bookstore for the fumes and the fog and the smoke that was coming through the bookstore.

But Cherry Hall did serve as, I suspect, the backbone of the instructional facility for the college and, later, the university. I remember in later years it became so heavily scheduled that it was virtually impossible at times to make your way through the corridors in Cherry Hall.

J.B.: Mm-hmm. The stairways were so terribly crowded.

D.D.: That's right.

J.B.: You mentioned registration a while ago. I assume that was when Mr. Canon was registrar. I want to ask you something. I have heard that at registration he pulled out a classroom chair and set it in the corner of the hall there in Cherry Hall, and every student came by and he approved their cards. Is that true?

D.D.: You were not registered at Western until you had those registration cards, initialed by E. H. Canon, and it was a great relief when you were finally able to make it through

that last station there where Mr. Canon - actually, he sat on a high stool at an elevated table, and he sat there as the final checkpoint, making certain that you did not have an excessive number of hours, making certain that you had a sufficient number of hours, making certain that whatever the program of study to which you had made a commitment that you were engaged in a strong, challenging list of courses - and just an outstanding individual, knew every student on campus, was personally interested in the students, and E. H. Canon over the years has had a great influence on Western, and he's had an impact on my personal and professional life, not only at the time that I was a student here, but later as we became associates and colleagues and as members of the faculty-staff at Western, and I've always had a great deal of respect for him. But the registrar at Western, as I'm sure was the case in a number of institutions of our type and size, the registrar was a significant position - well, it continues to be, of course, in the life of an institution of higher education. But in those early years, you had the dean of the college and he was the dean of all deaning. I think it was an appropriate title: The Dean of the College. And the registrar ranked right alongside of the dean of the college in terms of being one of the four or five principal administrative officials in the university. You had the bursar was another, and, of course, Miss Florence Schneider, who was an outstanding lady and a very fine individual as well as being a competent fiscal officer, was the bursar. Mr. Canon was the registrar and Dr. Grise was the dean of the college. And when you took those three individuals you had primarily the backbone of the administrative staff working with and under the president of the college.

J.B.: Mr. Garrett was president when you arrived, wasn't he?

D.D.: When I came in 1939, Dr. Paul Garrett had been president at that time for two years. I had not personally known Dr. Cherry; I had heard him speak. I had seen him at a distance and had known him, but did not know him personally. But I did get to know Dr. Garrett quite well during the time I was a student at Western. I was fortunate in the fact that

Dr. Garrett was an avid basketball fan, and he, at times, came to basketball practices. He - of course, with the college being fairly small in those days he knew every student on the campus and every student knew him. He did serve as president of Western from '37 until his death in '54 and was president at the time that I was a student here.

J.B.: Who are some of the other people you recall, say faculty members, when you were a student?

D.D.: Well, just as you came to know practically every student at Western, there was no reason why you did not know personally all of the faculty, because you had classes with most of them. I was a math major, and I think the only math teacher with whom I had not had a class was Mr. Hugh Johnson. For some reason or another, I missed having a class with Mr. Johnson. One of the reasons I did not have that pleasure and that opportunity was the fact that I chose in preparing or planning a schedule of study for my major in math to stay here on the campus and work and take some of the advanced math courses during the summer session, so that when we were in the basketball season - and back in those days when you had a trip to New York and perhaps you were playing in Philadelphia one game on that trip and you were playing New York City over in Buffalo, New York, you might be gone two weeks, because we didn't fly in those days; we traveled by train. And you take a couple of weeks out of a spring semester and I found that I wasn't that good of a math student. So, I'd leave some of those courses in calculus and differential equations 'til the summer, but one time I recall doing that and regretting that I had made that choice, because I ended up in the second course in calculus with only two in the class and the class being taught by the head of the department, Dr. Yarbrough. And we met it in his office, and with two in the class you didn't do much smoke-screening.

J.B.: You knew it or not.

D.D.: Especially with the head of the department. But the point I was going to make is that every other member of the faculty in the math department I had classes with them. And each department was fairly small. The Chemistry Department, I suspect was made up of about 3 people. We had Dr. McNally and Dr. Sumpter and Marvin Baker in those days. That was the three-man department in chemistry. And in the Physics Department I think that maybe there were three people: Mr. George Page, and I don't recall - Norris Barby, I think, taught there for a period of time. And when the departments were fairly small if you took a class at all in the department you knew just about everybody in there. The History Department is one in which I took some courses, and I wasn't the most outstanding history student, I'm sure Miss Egbert or Miss Gaby Robertson would tell you, but I had classes with both of those fine professors who were outstanding history teachers. And then, in addition, most of the members of the faculty were such outstanding people, like Dr. Stickles as head of the department. You didn't have to have a class under him to know him and know about him because of his reputation as an outstanding historian, as a figure on the campus. And Western, I think, had been very fortunate over the years back at that time. Practically every department on the campus had outstanding people who in some respects were unusual - unusual because of their very outstanding capabilities, their personality or other qualities that sort of set them apart. You take just about any department on campus and you could identify some of these outstanding individuals. Mr. Ivan Wilson, of course, in art. I had a class with Mr. Wilson at one time, and you certainly get to know and love many of these truly unique individuals with which Western was blessed in those early years. I say early years, and those who were here much earlier than from '39 to '43 would think I was Johnny-come-lately. But, actually, here at this point in time, 1978, when you look back to '39 that's a fairly good span.

J.B.: I was fairly early in this new wave of faculty growth, and I came in 1960, and so, I got to know most of the people you've mentioned, and I've just been highly impressed

by not only the professional but the personal qualities of all of these people. I'm just amazed that a relatively small school - I don't know how they managed to do this, but all the ones I knew were fine. 'Course one of my dearest friends now is Dr. Poteet.

D.D.: Dr. Poteet is certainly an outstanding person and I didn't have a class with Dr. Poteet; my wife had a class with him, and some of our children have had classes with him. I know I'm somewhat amused as I reflect on a personal incident with regard to Dr. Poteet. First of all, I would say that he has been one of the most supportive individuals and a close personal friend and a man for whom I have the highest regard, and that I will always appreciate the considerations that he has given to me and to members of my family. I told him of this occurrence because I thought he would be amused, as I was. Our oldest daughter, who attended Western during the early '60s, had a history class with Dr. Poteet. At that time I was Registrar, and after about 3 weeks in the class she came to my office one day and she said, "I'm going to drop that history class. I just feel like Dr. Poteet is a fine teacher, but he's not as friendly as I wish he was. I don't think he likes me." And I said, "Now, Catherine, you're not going to drop that class; you're going to remain in the class." So, it was with some reservation that she continued, and when we were registering for the spring semester she came rushing up and she had her grade report and she said, "Oh, Dad, I got a 'B' out of that history class and I'm so pleased." And I said, "I told you you would be pleased with Dr. Poteet." And I said, "He is just a wonderful fellow. Why don't you go over there now - he's over at that table registering students - and you go over there and tell him how much you enjoyed the class." And she left and in a few minutes I ran in to her and she was at the point of tears. I said, "Cathy, what's the matter?" She said, "Well, I went by to tell Dr. Poteet that I enjoyed his class and do you know what he told me?" And I said, "No." "He said, 'Well, I don't care how much you enjoyed it; I want to know whether you learned any history or not.'" He's really a great fellow.

J.B.: He is my idea of a real gentleman. We visit with him quite often. I've met some really fine people and I've enjoyed interviewing a lot of these and knowing a lot of the people.

Did you get to finish your degree before the war or did that interrupt things for you?

D.D.: Well, I read somewhere or saw somewhere the possibility that a student enrolled in a college or university back in 1941, '42 might have the opportunity to continue 'til the completion of the degree if he would join the Navy V-7 Program, I think was what it was called in those days, and I thought, well, that's something I'm going to pursue. And as I learned more about it I thought it had some appeal, and, of course, the greatest appeal was that there was an assurance that as long as you continued normal progress in your college work that you could stay in college rather than being drafted into the armed forces. 'Course a number of students were volunteering; others were being drafted. The World War II years were right on top of us, of course. And I joined the Navy, signed up on the V-7 program and continued then through the remaining two years. I did that right at the beginning of my junior year and then continued through the remaining two years of my college work and received my degree on June 4, 1943, and on the 16th (I remember those dates so well) I was to report to Midshipman's School at Columbia University in New York. And after I got up there and found out that that was the real Navy, I wondered why I had made that decision, because the biggest body of water I'd ever seen was Crasy's Pond up at Horse Cave, and I wondered how in the world they were going to make a sailor out of me in four months.

J.B.: Well, and then you spent how long in the Navy?

D.D.: Well, I went into Midshipman's School that June, remained there for the four-month period and received my commission as an ensign and caught that train just as soon

as I got those ensign bars and went to Searcy, Arkansas and married Harriet Yarnell, who had been...

END OF TAPE 1 - SIDE 1

J.B.: Okay.

D.D.: ... and then experienced the usual trauma that comes with trying to engage in the training process in preparation for more stringent military service, and I was assigned to a crew and we were placed aboard a ship before it ever came out of the shipyards. They sent us up to a little place out this side of Chicago that was building LST's. There was a little Navy yard there, and they were building these things on an assembly line kind of thing, and they put us aboard this thing and when they shoved it off of those skids out into the river, we had that crew aboard, and during the ensuing weeks we prepared to take that ship overseas. We did then cross the Atlantic with a sizeable convoy of LST's and other kinds of Navy vessels in March of '44, and then engaged in preparations there in South England to participate in the Normandy Invasion of South France. And on D-Day of - I guess it was June 6, 1944, old LST 515 hit that Omaha beach along with hundreds of others.

J.B.: I didn't know you were in that.

D.D.: Yeah. We had many exciting experiences as young Navy personnel and had great admiration for those in various branches of the military service that I watched and worked with and observed the manner in which our country was represented by the various branches of the military service during those war years. It was in many ways kind of like a dream as you look back on it now, and some of the experiences I would not take anything for having had the opportunity to participate and to experience those exciting events, and in

other ways you think that it's all something of a nightmare. It's something that I wouldn't want to experience again, but I wouldn't take anything for it as it occurred.

J.B.: Now, when you got out of the service did you come back to Western?

D.D.: I came out of - Well, actually, when we returned from the European theatre operations, we came into Boston in 1946 and - well, I guess it was late '45 - and we put that old LST (it had been beaten up pretty bad) and they put her in a shipyard in Boston and they were equipping it along with a lot of other ships that had been over in the European theatre to go to the Pacific. And the war with Japan had not terminated at that time, and I recall that while our ship was being outfitted for a different climate and a different type of operation, then the war with Japan came to a close. And then I stayed in the Navy along the eastern seaboard engaged in various activities that go along with helping put ships in moth balls and mustering people out and looking forward to the time that I would get out of the Navy. And it was in January of '46 that I came back to Bowling Green. Had no idea what I was going to do, and my wife and I came to the Western campus and we went to various places on the campus to visit friends. We went by to see President Garrett, went by to see Dr. Thompson, who at that time was Director of Public Relations and assistant to President Garrett, and, of course, went by to chat with Mr. Diddle and just generally to visit with folks. And while in the old administrative offices of Van Meter - that's where the president's office was and up on the second floor there was the alumni placement office, Uncle Billy Craig. We went up to visit Uncle Billy and Grace Overby and Billy called me in there and he said, "C. H. Jagers has sent word that he wanted you to come back over to the training school; he wanted to chat with you." And I went over to the training school and Dr. Jagers said, "We need a coach." Barry Lawrence was the coach at the College High School and then they retained their athletic team in basketball at College High. Back in those days it was grades one or kindergarten through twelve and they had their upper six:

grades, 7 through 12, was known as College High. And they had a pretty good little athletic program, in particularly basketball, and during the two years that Barry Lawrence had gone into the service who was coach there, Mr. Diddle and Mr. Hornback were coaching the Western team; they were also coaching College High. Had an outstanding high school team; they'd been beating the socks off of everybody in this whole area. So, Dr. Jagers said, "We need a full-time coach and wonder if you would be interested in the job." And I said, "Well, I certainly would be interested in it." And he said, "Well, I'm going to call President Garrett and recommend to him that you be employed." So, I guess it was about in March of '46 then that they actually put me on the payroll. Mr. Diddle and Mr. Hornback suggested that I go ahead and start coaching that basketball team during the latter part of that season, along in the latter part of January and February, but I read the tea leaves right quickly, and, recognizing that they'd been beating everyone and they thought they might even win the state tournament - and they did win their first game there - but I knew that if I took over that basketball team for Mr. Diddle and Mr. Hornback - and both of them wanted me to because they had grown a little bit weary of coaching both the high school and the college team - but if I won the state tournament with that team I would have been doing it with their team, and if I'd lost that first game or not gone to state -

J.B.: You'd have been in bad trouble.

D.D.: So, I told them I'd just wait until that season was over. So, that March they put me on the payroll at \$1800 a year. Sometimes as we struggle with these problems we have in our present day and age in trying to strengthen the salary structure, some of the criticisms are leveled at all of us, I suspect, from time to time, in wondering whether we have any insight into the economic problems that families experience. I can assure you that on \$1800 a year you eat a lot of pinto beans.

J.B.: Right.

D.D.: So, I've been over that road, and you know salaries at Western in those years were extremely low. I remember when Dr. Garrett talked with me about taking this job, he said, "You know you can find a lot of things you can make a lot more money in." In fact, he even mentioned the fact that Mr. Diddle, who had already, of course, gained national prominence, even though he continued to grow in stature in the great career that he had as a coach at Western, but he pointed out the fact that Mr. Diddle was only making \$4300 at that time. And, of course, the statutes required that no person in the institution make more than \$7500, so the president of Western was making \$7500.

J.B.: I can understand those figures. I started teaching about - well, in the fall of '47 down in McLean County and I know what you mean by low salaries. They didn't pay a great deal.

Well, now, you then, the next fall, started your full-time duties as coach. Were you doing any teaching?

D.D.: Well, I - From 1946 until 1951 I coached and taught Physical Education and Health. I coached basketball, baseball, track, tennis and golf and taught a full class schedule from 8 until 3, supervised the gymnasium where everyone brought their lunch - and most of the students at the training school back in those days brought their lunch rather than - they had no place, no cafeteria at that time. And they either brought their lunch or they would go to the Goalpost or the old Western lunchroom for their lunch. So, I supervised the lunch hour and taught from 8 to 3 and coached those four - and it was some of the most demanding years of my experience in our profession. And there are those who may have a feeling - and actually, my major field and what I taught later was math, and in the eyes of many that sounds more professional, sounds more academic, but I want to say

to you that to be taught well and to engage in a professional program of physical education, it is one of the most demanding subjects to be taught. There are specific skills that need to be mastered; there are sequences of motor abilities to be taught, and there are those who think that teaching physical education - that all it is is tossing out a ball and letting them go at it.

J.B.: I've seen it done that way.

D.D.: But it's - if it is done in a professional way - and I guess I worked as hard if not harder teaching physical education both at the elementary and high school level in College High as any of the teaching experiences that I've had.

J.B.: When did you begin teaching math?

D.D.: 1953. There was an opening in the high school math. Bernice Wright was a tremendous math teacher, and she had working with her in the high school there a young fellow by the name of Hal Gilmore. Hal decided he wanted to go away and work on his doctorate and that left a vacancy in algebra and geometry and 8th grade arithmetic. So, Dr. Jagers came and talked with me about the fact that my major field was math and that he would like for me to teach math. So, I told him that I would be delighted to do that and moved then into the teaching of math, and in 1956, one day Dr. Thompson called me and said, "We want to name Dr. C. H. Jagers, who is head of the training school, as head of our Department of Psychology, and we would like for you to be director of the training school." He said, "Dr. Grise is very supportive of you in that position, and as our chief academic officer he is willing for this recommendation to move forward with his endorsement if you would be agreeable to pursuing graduate study, primarily in the area of curriculum and supervisonal instruction and some of the things that we feel that the director of our lab school should have, a more formal education." And I told him that I would be willing to do that. And, so

I started that summer in taking graduate classes at Peabody, and then that next fall - it was in the fall of '56 - I commenced as the director of the training school and had in the training school outstanding faculty members. And in those days we were doing all of our student teaching there. I know you would have - sometimes in your classes as many what we called in those days practice teachers or student teachers as you had students in the class. And it was in '56 that we commenced, however, to branch out into the public schools in our teacher education program. The experience as director of the training school was one which I enjoyed very much. I was amused one time at Mr. George Page, who was head of our Physics Department and continues as a valued personal friend. I had had some classes in physics under him. He was a little bit surprised to find that a basketball player was a pretty good physics student. I don't claim to have the greatest record that's ever gone on file in the Registrar's Office, but I always took great pride in having good standing in the academic community. So, I developed some friendship with Mr. Page having had classes with him in physics, and he stopped me on the campus after I'd been in this job about a year as director of the training school. And you'd have to know Mr. Page to appreciate his expressions and everything, but he cleared his throat three or four times, and he said, "I just wonder how you're liking your job, having replaced Dr. Jagers over at the training school." And I said, "Well, I like it fine. Great faculty there and the spirit of the school is outstanding. The parents support the school program, good bunch of youngsters." I said, "I like it fine." And he cleared his throat again and he said, "Well, it's a good thing you do, because nobody else would have it."

J.B.: That cuts you down.

So, you were there as director of the training school until you moved to the Registrar's Office?

D.D.: In 1959, Dr. Thompson called me and I went over to his office and he said, "I'd like for you to move into the position of registrar at Western." And I said, "Oh, my

goodness! What's going to happen to Mr. Canon?" And he said, "Well, the Board of Regents has initiated a policy which is going to make it necessary that Mr. Canon and a few other individuals in the university - or in the college - it will be necessary for them to go on inactive status." He said, "Mr. Canon is 74 years old." Well, I was flabbergasted, because E. H. Canon I thought at that time would have been more nearly in his early and certainly not more than his mid-sixties, because he gave every appearance of being much younger than his age at that time. But, at any rate, Dr. Thompson said that he would like for me to move into that position. He said, "Now, I don't want you to worry about anything with regard to preparation for it. Mr. Canon will be registrar until after our summer commencement. Summer Commencement is on Friday, August 7, and your tenure as registrar is going to commence on August 8, which is Saturday." Well, Saturday in those years, those days, was a right important day on campus. All the offices stayed open until noon on Saturday. And so we went through summer commencement, and no one could have been nicer to me at that time or since than E. H. Canon. But he very meticulously had cleared the office and cleaned out his desk and had made all the preparations for me to move in on that Saturday, August 8. And I went in there, and I didn't know anything about what a registrar was supposed to do, but I thought it sounded like that maybe the most logical thing was to call all your staff together - the staff was about four people at that time - and have a staff meeting, at least, and let them know that we were going to be teaming up to try to do the kind of job that would be a credit to Western. So, I shall never forget. We were there in the old registrar's office in that wing of Cherry Hall and Nancy Bryan and - oh, I can't recall the names of the others right now, but we were there and I was just about as serious as I could be and a little bit edgy, of course in terms of moving into that position. The door opened; I don't know who the lady was. She had on a great flowery hat. She was to some extent, I suspect typical of many of the teachers who were returning for the completion of their studies. Many of them were on provisional certificates having gone to school part time and going out and teaching. And she appeared to be one of those persons, a very gracious-looking lady. But she stuck her head through that door with that

great big flowery hat and she said in a loud voice, "All I can say is there will never be another Mr. Canon!" Of course, I was taken a little bit aback and the staff was a little embarrassed for me, but my only reaction was (and I didn't have an opportunity to say this to her because she slammed the door and rushed away) - but I told the staff there, I said, "Well, I couldn't agree with anyone more, because I don't think there will ever be another Mr. Canon either."

J.B.: That was a fine way to get started, wasn't it?

Well, now was that - let's see, what was that year again?

D.D.: That was in 1963.

J.B.: '63.

D.D.: No, it was in '59, 1959, that I moved into the registrar's position.

J.B.: Now, that was about the time that the enrollment started booming, wasn't it? You really faced problems.

D.D.: We commenced at that time seeing some indications - along in '56, '57, '58 it was remaining around 1600 to 1800, along about that level. And one of the things that commenced happening about that time is folks started talking with me - I hadn't been in that registrar's position but a few weeks when people started calling on me about the more sophisticated means through which operations such as the registrar's office could function if they would move to what they called in those days data processing. And Mr. Canon had always done it by hand, and I thought that I wasn't going to make the mistake of judging too quickly too far in terms of changing some of the procedures in the registration system.

But I guess in many ways I was fortunate in having a more innovative and imaginative mind that moved into a collegial position right across the hall from me. Raymond Cravens became dean of the college succeeding Dr. F. C. Grise, and Raymond had experienced some of the same conditions that I had in terms of going into that office to some extent unschooled and - not totally unprepared, I certainly wouldn't say, but - not knowing exactly what to expect. But Raymond had a very fine mind in terms of innovation, in terms of more imaginative ways to do things, and I think as he and I have commented over the years to one another maybe there was a reasonable balance. I'm sure I tended to be over-conservative and there were times that I indicated to Raymond that I thought maybe he was a little too innovative, but through our working together in those years it was almost entirely a matter of the direction from that kind of activity in the university, in the college, to come under the supervision and the overall administrative responsibility of the dean of the college and registrar. And we came up with some pretty far-fetched ideas about how to register more quickly and how to get through that process with more ease in terms of the staff and faculty time and effort and also the smoothness by which it might be better done as far as the student was concerned. We registered in Cherry Hall, you know, and I always wondered how we got through some of the things that we planned, because it didn't always work out just like it appeared to be on paper. But we did move to the more primitive configurations of the IBM data processing, and then we've gradually, I think, over the years brought about more sophistication into the processes. But the three years that I served as registrar were interesting ones; they were certainly learning years for me because I feel that that experience has been very beneficial to me in other roles in the university that I have attempted to fill.

We had a gentleman here who was head of the Sociology Department, and I never will forget one day we were in a meeting of the department heads and we were preparing for a registration period and Dr. Cravens called on me as registrar to outline the procedures for registration. And I went before this group - and you could get the department heads

at that time into just a small conference room because there were so few of them - I continued to refer to members of the faculty as teachers, and I'll always be indebted to Wilson Wood because he came to my defense that day. Dr. Oates, who was head of the Sociology Department, got up before this group and he said, "Our registrar seems to think that the professors of this institution of higher education are nothing more than teachers." And he said that he was incensed that I would refer to members of our faculty as teachers. And Wilson Wood asked to be recognized and, I tell you, he layed it on the line in terms of how proud he was to be referred to as a teacher. And that's a little sidelight to some of the kinds of things that would occur in your relationship -

END OF TAPE 1 - SIDE 2

J.B.: Okay. We're in business again.

D.D.: One of the things as registrar that is worthy of note is the fact that, in those days, the registrar was also the admissions officer, did all the academic advisement for students. And we had commenced then, in the '60s, '61, for example, 1961 - we had a 33 1/3% increase in our enrollment in that one year. And all of the admissions files were kept in the registrar's office; you did all of the admitting and the registering as well. And I guess it was sort of a natural transition then that we underwent two or three years of that just almost unbelievable increase in enrollment. And Dr. Thompson called me in one day and he said, "I'd like to make a change: find someone else to serve as registrar of the college and ask you, if you would, to become Dean of Admissions." I told him that I would be willing to try. So, we set up the Dean of Admissions in the outer office of Dr. Thompson, who was president, and he asked me to give half time to the admissions process and half time to serving in sort of a role of, I guess you would refer to as Assistant to the President, sort of a trouble-shooting role, but my official title then commencing in 1963 was Dean of Admissions. I must say that in the years that have passed since that that job from time to time looks awfully good.

J.B.: I bet it does.

And, now let's see, you were in that job how long?

D.D.: Well, for about two years. We had some changes that took place, I guess it was, in about 1964 that required some attention in the business office, and late one afternoon Dr. Thompson called me in, and he said, "I'd like for you to continue to serve as Dean of Admissions, but I'd like you to move your base of operation over into the business office and sort of serve as an anchor post there to take us through a period of time until we find (what in those days was) a business manager." I told him, "Now, I'll be willing to do it, but you're really moving me into an area that I don't have any knowledge of, you know." He said, "Well, you've had enough math training and you know enough about figures that at least you can add and subtract. And I want you to go over there and rely on the good people we have there to continue to do the kind of job that needs to be done in the business office. But I want you there to sort of direct and supervise this until we find a person to take over in that area." And he said, "Well, it will only be about thirty days and then we'll have you back over here." That thirty days grew into sixty and sixty grew into one hundred twenty, and then I guess it was sort of a natural gravitation to less and less admissions function and more and more business function. And he indicated to me one day that he would like for me to identify the person that I would like to have work under me. He wanted me to be Dean of Business Affairs and to have a person under me that would, in my opinion, be what in earlier years would have been our business manager. And we talked with a number of people, and I got word from some of our friends in Frankfort that there were some folks there we ought to have a talk with, and one of them was Charlie Zettlemoyer. Charlie was with the Legislative Research Commission at that time and had been described to us as just an outstanding individual who would make a fine contribution. And I contacted Charlie; he was interested in this position. About that time I went to a professional meeting of business officers down there and while I was there I went to - Press Ordway

had been chief business officer at Murray for years and years, and I went to old Press's room and I said, "Press, if you were looking for a single individual to head up the business functions, responsibilities - take the responsibility for fiscal affairs under you at Murray, to whom would you turn?" He said, "Well, there's a young fellow at Frankfort by the name of Harry Largen I think is just tremendous. He's with the finance department in Frankfort." So, about a half day passed and I was in the company of the chief fiscal officer at Eastern, and I asked him the same question, and he said, "You know, there's a young fellow in Frankfort that the more I see of him, the more I deal with him, I just think he's outstanding." I said, "Who's that?" He said, "Harry Largen." So, we were at the airport getting ready to come back and the chief fiscal officer at Morehead and I were chatting and I asked him the same question and he came up with the same answer. So, I came home and I told Dr. Thompson, I said, "Do you know a fellow in Frankfort by the name of Harry Largen?" And he said, "Oh, yeah. I've seen Harry. He's with the Department of Finance in Frankfort." I told him what had happened and he said, "Well, you know Zettlemoyer wanted to come and we know we can get him; we know he's an outstanding man. We better move in that direction while we can. However, when we go to Frankfort (in the next two or three days we were going up there), you talk with Largen and see what he has to say." So, I had never met Harry, went to the finance department, asked him if he'd join me in the cafeteria for a cup of coffee. Well, we went down and had a cup of coffee, and I said, "Did you ever think about working at one of the universities or one of the colleges?" He said, "Well, no, I never have, but I certainly have always had a lot of respect for Western. The people in finance have a great deal of respect for Dr. Thompson, and we think you all have a fine institution. What do you have in mind?" So, I talked with him about it and he said he would be willing to come to the campus for a visit. So, on the way back home - we had flown up there that day and on the way back - Dr. Thompson asked me about him. And I said, "Do you know what I think? The thing for us to do it to hire Zettlemoyer and Largen if we can get them." So, we brought those two gentlemen into

our program I guess it was in 1964 or early '65, and between them they provided - along with the other members of the staff in the business office - they provided me during the years I was in the business operation of the university just tremendous help and support and assistance that, had it not been for Harry Largen and Charlie Zettlemoyer and people like Hubert Hardaway and Lois Dickey and others in that business office area, I guess I would have been like a lost ball in high weeds. But then out of that business experience and operation, there came a point in time when Dr. Thompson, as we moved into university status, felt that there should be reorganization that would call for a vice-president's role, and he recommended to the Board of Regents and the board named Dr. Cravens Vice-president of Academic Affairs and I was placed in the position of Vice-president for Business Affairs. That's sort of a long, drawn-out, chronological resume, and I guess a bunch of it is more reminiscing than it is of any beneficial historical record, but that's pretty much how it occurred.

J.B.: Now, that came just prior to the change from college to university status?

D.D.: Yes, about 1966.

J.B.: Did you begin as registrar at about the time Ray began as dean?

D.D.: Same day.

J.B.: Same day? I knew it was pretty close, but...

D.D.: Same day. August 8, 1959.

J.B.: So, you hadn't had, either of you, too much experience in those jobs the next year when I got here.

D.D.: No, we were greenhorns of the first order. We sometimes said amusingly to one another as our duties and responsibilities overlapped considerably - and I was very fortunate that Raymond was a patient and understanding person. You know, we couldn't have functioned as we did over some of those times unless we had been willing to accept the fact that there were no clear-cut lines where the deaning ended and the registraring commenced or vice-versa. And I was always willing as he was to just make up our minds that whatever it took to get the job done was what we were willing to do, and I've always appreciated his support and understanding of many of the problems with which we dealt, because had we not approached it in that way, I think we would have been hopelessly lost because of the overwhelming demands that just came through the pure increase in numbers of people with which we had to work.

J.B.: You're swamped every semester, aren't you?

D.D.: Bring in 50, 60 faculty members a year, you know...

J.B.: That was a tremendous thing to adjust to. From what you've been saying, you've pretty well indicated something that I've heard others say, well, Mrs. Stonecipher and some others who came much earlier, and that was that the employment process was not only a rather simple process, but it was pretty much a personal kind of thing. The president chose someone and that was just about it, wasn't it? That's compared with a rather cumbersome system now.

D.D.: The president pretty well decided what was felt to be needed in a particular position and moved in that direction, and I think there are some benefits in having that type of operation. I'm sure that the strengthening of certain procedural guidelines through which we go and carry out some of these functions are, all in all, for the better,

but I would have to say also many times they become overly cumbersome, and I think I've seen instances where it would be to the detriment of the individuals involved as well as to the effective fulfillment of a responsibility.

J.B.: Seems like to me that there's a great cost, both in money and time, with the procedures all schools have to go through now. You've got to advertise it nationally, and you're obligated to bring people from great distances in, and you all along know pretty well how it's gonna come out, but you have to go through all this. And being a child of the Depression, any kind of waste sort of bothers me. I've wondered about that.

When did Billy Smith come here? It was quite early in the sixties, I guess.

D.D.: Yeah. Billy came in, I'd say, about '58 or '59, I would guess. Or maybe as early as '57. Billy was with the Department of Finance in Frankfort, and Dr. Thompson prevailed upon him to come here as business manager at the time Miss Schneider retired as Bursar. I guess it was about '58.

J.B.: That was the time when they changed the name from Bursar to Business Manager.

D.D.: Yes.

J.B.: And then he was not here long.

D.D.: Let's see, he was here I guess about 5 or 6 years.

J.B.: I know that he left shortly after I came, and I couldn't remember exactly when.

Now, let's see, we've gotten up to Vice-president for Business Affairs and it's about a quarter of 4. I imagine you're getting a little weary of this.

D.D.: It would be a good stopping point for me if it is for you.

J.B.: Yeah, it's fine. Providing you'll let me come back.

D.D.: I'd be delighted.

END OF 1st PART OF INTERVIEW